

“Revolutionary” Winds Blow in the *Shtetl*

The memories of bygone days in the town of Żarki emerge and surge up, as if out of a fog. This was about 1912. Every evening, friends would come to my brother Abram Fajner z”l. As a small child, I would listen in on their conversations. Amongst them, I remember Szymon the son of Szmul (the *shames*), Mojsze-Wolf Gotlib, Szlojme Turner and others. Szymon the *shames*’ son played the violin and he brought sad, touching melodies with him, such as *Die Nacht Far Kol Nidrei*¹ and others.

From the desire to bring something new to the life of the *shtetl*, an interest awoke to bring lighting into the Synagogue in the form of two gas lanterns, to replace the petrol lamps which gave out only a faint light. I remember the night [when all] gathered for the testing of the new lights. With what excitement and uplifted spirits old and young alike all looked on, as the *shames* stood on a bench and tended, according to the instructions he had received, to their lighting! All at once, a blinding, white light spread from wall to wall. Every Friday afternoon, when I walked with my father z”l to the Study-hall, I popped round to the Synagogue to view the wonder anew.

Those, who participated in the foundation of the *Linas Ha’Tzedek*² Society for guests who were stuck³ in town, paid a monthly membership fee and took turns to manage the housekeeping of the rooms.

The Summer of 1914

Late one evening, my brother Abram z”l returned home from the house of Mojsze Winter (*feldscher*) [barber-surgeon], where he used to have his hair cut, with news on his lips - Mieczyk the Drummer had come from the *kancelaria* [chancellery; (governmental) office] and had put up red notices - a general mobilisation! The next day, a Friday, the *shtetl* received a great shock. Call-up papers were given out to [appear] on the following morning in the nearby village of Wysoka [Lelowska]⁴. Our neighbour, Jojneson Rubinsztajn, declared he would not desecrate the *Shabbes* and went to pray at the *shtiebel* [as usual]. The following day - on Sunday - it turned out that he could no longer join his regiment and he was sent back home. Other locals like him were also left behind, as the Russians had meanwhile retreated and the Germans had entered hot on their heels.

The War brought about changes and an awakening, and even the breaching of concepts of modesty to a certain extent - such as Jewish girls promenading with German soldiers and singing songs with them⁵. The centre of entertainment was the renowned *Tanzbrücke* [Dance-bridge] and the grove surrounding it.

The dwindling peasantry could not do its shopping in Żarki, due to the fact the German Army had wrested every cow or pig from them, using “official vouchers” instead of cash money to pay for them, and the villagers had to beg that they, at least, have the hides returned to them.

¹ [TN: “The Night Before All Vows” – the opening prayer of the Yom Kippur service.]

² [TN: “Lodgings of Righteousness,” viz. providing adequate hospitality for wayfaring guests.]

³ [TN: Typically, people who had come on business, and had not been able to find transport on Friday to leave the *shtetl* before *Shabbes*.]

⁴ [TN: This locality is just 3 km from Żarki, but was obviously outside the town limits within which an observant Jew would have been allowed to walk on *Shabbes*, even without carrying his papers and other effects which he was not permitted to carry on *Shabbes* anyway.]

⁵ [TN: It is a huge understatement, on the part of the author, to say these phenomena were “a breach of concepts of modesty to a certain extent” - in a Chassidic *shtetl*, it would have been unthinkable for anyone, let alone a young woman, to have any unnecessary dealings at all with Gentiles, not to mention young foreign soldiers. Furthermore, as Halacha forbids men to hear the song of a woman who is not their wife or very close relative, a girl raised in a religious home would never have dreamt of singing in public.]

In the middle of the square, the German slaughterer, who held the cow by a rope tied to its neck, would stun it with one blow of his axe, making it fall on its knees. While it was still alive, he would skin it – as the peasant woman stood beside him weeping, calling out for a Jew who knew the German’s language to intercede for her, that she have the hide returned to her. German cruelty! The Germans confiscated all types of materials and, above all, manufactured leather goods. This brought about unemployment in the town’s main professions of shoemaking, stitching, etc. This had a negative influence on the livelihood of the local Jews, which was based mainly on the shopping of the farmers on Wednesdays - which was market day. This forced the youth to leave the locality and to sign up for work in Germany, where there was a shortage of working hands. On their way to Germany, they usually changed trains - ending up in Budapest or Tyrol, where they found employment in hotels - mainly as concierges, waiters, etc. Following the failed Communist Revolution in Budapest, the foreigners - and primarily the Jews - were banished from that city. When they returned to Żarki, they brought new spirits to the town. Amongst them, I remember Chaim Zielonka, Aron Szwimmer, Pinchas Rytterband and others.

My father’s relatives lived in our house - a bookbinder, with his second wife – who was Chaim Zielonka’s mother. During the first year of the War, Zielonka returned from Warsaw, where he had been a member of [the playwright] Peretz Hirschbein’s troupe and, together with his sister Bajla, he came to live with his mother. I would come to them in the evenings to hear about Warsaw, which I had hitherto known only from reading books. I was particularly thrilled by bits from a certain play, which he repeated when the good spirit rested upon him. In its day, he organised an amateur troupe, which included Mojsze Goldman (the son of the *melamed* Srul Joske’s⁶), his sister Bajla, Aron Szwimer, Isser [given name] and others. Unless my memory deceives me, they put on [the play] *Moishe the Tailor* [?]. The performance took place at the “*Kotlarnia*” [Boiler-house⁷] venue - a dilapidated building without any flooring, with a broken window facing the stage. I stood outside and enjoyed the play. This was in 1916.

They said of Chaim that he had lived it up in Budapest “like God in Paris”. In the evenings, he had promenaded on the streets of the capital with a young, pretty girl on each arm - his towering figure [rising] between them, and his sonorous voice and mighty laughter reverberating down the entire thoroughfare.

His wealthy brother, Josef Zielonka, lived on ul. Myszków, in a fine two-storey house built of red brick, with an entrance facing the street. According to what their mother told us, he did not support them - and his brother Chaim was left without employment. At this point, he devoted himself to the theatre which he had founded. Meanwhile, he married the daughter of Wolwe’le [Wolf] Waciarz⁸, a wealthy horse dealer from ul. Krakowska, in front of the *kancelaria*.

Having been influenced by the slogans of the revolution in Budapest, Chaim dedicated himself to spreading propaganda amongst the workers - the local, Jewish proletariat - in a bid to establish an alternative to the local Ezra Zionist Union. He began organising young men and women of the working class, who socially and personally did not have access to the aforementioned union, although formally nothing prevented them from joining it. They spent their time dancing, drinking a barrel of beer together and eating a quarter of a roast goose in the house of Mendel Klajnman or Mendel Lajzer’s.

⁶ [TN: Izrael son of Josek Goldman, a Żarki resident.]

⁷ [TN: See above, p.57.]

⁸ [TN: וואַצערז (Woczurz) in the original; this exact surname does not appear to exist.]

One evening, in the Study-hall, the prayer service was interrupted when Chaim went up onto the [Torah-reading] platform to demand, on behalf of the workers, that the administrators allocate a certain sum for the establishment of literary evening lessons for them, under his direction.

Furthermore, they also demanded of the local Zionist Organisation that a number of books be allotted to this purpose, arguing that Abram-Josef Szybel z"l had not meant his donation to be just for one social class. This endeavour, too, was unsuccessful, as the Zionists objected to splitting up the library.

In the room of Aron Szwimmer, who was also among those who had returned from Budapest, every evening, a number of friends would gather and one of them would aloud read chapters from Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. Aron became friends with one of his profession - shoe-stitching - [named] Aron Lemel, and he would explain to him the Socialist ideals which he had embraced while in Budapest. Meanwhile, Lemel married and began to run his business very energetically and with great success. He employed several labourers and, suddenly, became a capitalist and an "exploiter of workers". This caused a bit of a rift between the two friends.

Szwimmer befriended a girl, who was living at Mojsze-Wolf Gotlib's house - a redheaded girl who had come there from Częstochowa and who had a revolutionary past. Rumours circulated that she had been in jail due to underground activity. More than once, they attempted to bring me into their company, explaining to me that the working class had nothing to expect from bourgeois Zionist society, which would never resolve the problem of class. They [eventually] succeeded.

On most Friday nights, before the *Kiddush*⁹, Szwimmer would come to our house to take a look at the newspapers and to exchange American periodicals, of which we had an abundance, because Abram-Josef Szybel's cultural activity included also sending all kinds of papers and magazines and I was the one in charge of them - [so] he had an opportunity to choose [his] reading material. Later, I realised the [real] reason for his visits. It was not necessarily the newspapers, but the traditional atmosphere that reigned in our home on Friday nights, which he was probably lacking as he lived in one room together with his mother and not in brilliant conditions.

One Friday night, [I went out] following the meal. One could already see the first to leave the *Shabbes* table, just after the post-meal blessing, promenading in the square. Here and there, summer vacationers could also be seen. They were recognisable from afar due to the way they dressed and their raucous behaviour. The *Shabbes* candles at Chana's (Szaja-Zelig's¹⁰) house had already gone out. Among those strolling I met Aron Szwimmer with his girlfriend, who was coming from ul. Krakowska. I joined them and we continued walking together.

Between the ditties we sang (by the way, he had talent for singing), they expressed their desire to call a workers' meeting for the next afternoon and to organise them to [engage in] operations beneficial to them. We chose the woods, which stretched up to the railway tracks leading from Częstochowa to Myszków, as the place for the meeting. I was given the task of organising the gathering with great secrecy. The following day, after the *Shabbes* noon-day meal, the square and the streets were already deserted. The burghers were peacefully asleep and the youth was passing the time, as usual, in Leśniów, in the grove next to the spring, refreshing themselves in the crystalline water which flowed in abundance. Any sharp eye could have observed groups of two's or three's emerging from different directions - from ul. Krakowska and Leśniowska, [and] the Synagogue street - and disappearing into ul. Częstochowska and Koziegłowska, towards the rendezvous point.

⁹ [TN: "Sanctification"; blessing said over a goblet of wine at the beginning of the Friday night meal.]

¹⁰ [TN: This is probably Chana Epszajn née Finkel, daughter of Szaja-Zelig and Gitla.]

In the middle of the forest, among tall trees, we sat in a circle around Aron Szwimmer and his girlfriend. As a precaution, we distributed “Flirt” cards (the game was then in vogue) among the friends, to provide us with an “alibi” in case there was trouble. The girl - Szwimmer’s future wife - read us a sad story by Jacob Gordin [entitled] “*Geld un Leben*” (Money and Life), in which he tells of a renowned physician in America, who refused to give medical aid to a woman who was critically ill, due to her inability to pay him for her treatment. Meanwhile, the woman died and her husband took revenge on the doctor by killing him. Before the slaying, he drove the *Chevra Kadisha* people away and did not allow his wife’s body to be befouled by the hands, which could have saved her, but had failed to do so. He buried her at night in a field outside the city, under the open skies. We dispersed with the feeling that something was wrong with this world and that it needed to be set right.

The next operation had to take the form of protesting against the inhuman conditions of the labourers, such as [demanding] fewer working hours, the raising of wages, etc.

The proletariat was divided into two classes - some worked with their parents, while others were hired labourers. Their professions [included] shoe-stitching workers, cobblers, tailors, tanners, seamstresses, etc. One Sunday in 1921, a strike broke out among the workers. Not everyone came to their workplaces. The *shtetl* was in an uproar. My cousin, Abram Fajner, who worked together with his brother Juda-Lajb, and who employed Jankel [?¹¹] (Jankel the Black) and others, went up to Aron Szwimmer in the street and blamed him for the “revolutionary” scandal. My brother-in-law Hersz-Dawid Kolin z”l came to complain to me that the workers at his tailoring workshop – Mojsze Luria and Berl the Black - had not come to work.

My friends, the tanners Jakow-Lajzer Alterwajn, Pinchas Rytterband and Nojech Lajtenberg (even though he worked with his father) [also] joined the strike. The employers made a huge scene and threatened to give the names of those inciting the strike to the local police.

The following day, the unsuccessful strike in the *shtetl* ended.

The situation of those who worked with their parents was rather odd, because the “exploiters” were their own flesh and blood, and the “exploited” did not need to walk far from home. The workshop usually doubled as the dining room, and it was near the bedroom. We soon found out that it was not easy to do something for these people. My father z”l was extremely concerned for my fate and he asked me to distance myself from these deeds.

The most tragic part of it all is that there was actually nobody against whom to fight.

A Branch of *Ha’Chalutz*¹² is Established

After a hard day’s work, only a small percentage of the workers dedicated themselves to reading books and improving their minds. We ordered textbooks from Kraków, following the “Wolkowski’s letters” method. My friend Lajzer-Dawid Goldman, the son of the town’s *melamed* Chaim-Lajb, who was a member of Agudas Yisroel, had spent several years in Kraków. His mother Nacha *Chwula*’s¹³ was remembered by many as having been the landlady of an inn and, even before that, she had excelled in baking pastries called “*tataszuch*” [?], which she used to bring to the Study-hall entrance and sell to those studying there.

¹¹ [TN: פנטיקעס (p/fntikes) in the original; possibly a misprint of “Pinczke’s” – the son of Pinczke, or Little Pinchas.]

¹² [TN: “The Pioneer”; a Jewish youth movement which trained young people for agricultural settlement in the Land of Israel.]

¹³ [TN: Nacha née Finkel; possibly daughter of Jakow Finkel and Rywka-Chwula née Liberman.]

When he returned to Żarki, he was unsure which path to choose for his future. He could not find himself among his friends in *Agudas Yisroel*, so he dedicated himself, together with me, to studies. I remember how we sat whole evenings by the petrol lamp, repeating to one another, the lessons from Wolkowski's "letters". My brother Juda z''l was also in our group. First, we studied Polish and then we went on to learning the Hebrew language with the Sephardic pronunciation. On Saturdays, we went on picnics (*majówka* in Polish) - and we wove dreams about the Land of Israel.

In order to make the dream come true, to put it into practice, a number of young people got together and began looking for a way to realise the emigration to the Land of Israel. Thus, the *Ha'Chalutz* branch was established in Żarki. At the end of the Synagogue street, on the left-hand side, past the late Icchok-Nachman Bratman's factory, was a large, empty plot that he owned. Icchok-Nachman gave us permission to use it for agricultural training. The members of the branch approached a Jew, who owned a sawmill (*tartak*) in Myszków, with the request that he donate some planks and different bits of wood to us with which to fence off the plot. The group at once began work with great enthusiasm. The professional farming instructor was Majer Szajewicz. I remember how he showed us, for the first time, how to hold the spade with one hand, while pushing down on the iron shoulder with the foot, so that it should enter thirty centimetres into the fertilised soil, and then how to turn it over together with the dirt. We had started off by bringing carts with manure, which we had spread over the terrain. This became known to Jews with overgrown beards and women wearing dark-coloured headscarves, who came to see the wonder - how Jewish lads were doing the work that was usually done by the Gentiles and were freely inhaling the "delightful aroma" which exuded from the ground. They could scarcely credit their eyes, that the lads, whom they had known for their song full of yearning for Zion, were engaged in common farm work!



A group of pioneers at their work

Jakow Wajsman z''l, the son of Chana'le *Rojzla's* who owned an ironmonger's in the Square, went with the farming instructor to a shop on ul. Krakowska in order to buy different kinds of seeds. Some weeks later, carrots, onions, potatoes, etc. sprouted from the ground. We put up a bower (*altana*), the outer walls of which were covered with creepers. Inside, stood a small table surrounded with benches, upon which we sat and held our meetings.

Every night, two or three members went out to guard the property, fearing the Christian neighbours would sabotage the crops. They did not view our endeavour favourably, for the Jews were utilising

the territory which they had previously put to their own uses. At the other side of the plot stood Iczchok *Gurgel's* [?] house, with a bench next to it. On this bench, the guards, by rotation, sat until daybreak - envisioning themselves in their wakeful dreams in the yearned-for land, guarding one of its farms.

As *Lag Ba'Omer* approached, we began planning a traditional outing. Nearing daybreak, all the *Ha'Chalutz* members appeared wearing special shirts. We were joined by the youngsters of *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair*¹⁴ and others, and we set out armed with sticks upon which to lean and with which to defend ourselves if needed. We walked in a long file, with a cart full of provisions trailing behind us. We were a group of some 60 people. We passed through the villages of Wysoka, Przybynów [and] Kozięłowy. On our way back, we rested in a shady forest, feasted and polished off the banquet with singing. When we neared the *shtetl*, it was already dark and Jews, accompanied by children, came out to meet us after the evening prayer service. In the streets, petrol lamps and candles were lit in the windows in order to light up our way. Tired and filled with contentment, we returned home.

Our gatherings usually took place in the narrow defile, which had been carved into the hill by the road leading to Jaworznik. It was several metres deep and had an area of some 30-40 metres. Its entrance was on the roadside, in front of the steep walls. There, we could hold meetings undisturbed.

The situation was not a brilliant one and we were not left with much to expect from the Central [Branch]. The number of certificates, which the Land of Israel Bureau in Warsaw received, was limited and the majority went to the *Ha'Chalutz* members, who were at the training [farm] in Grochów [next to Warsaw] and other places. Our members were mostly above twenty years of age. Each had his own special circumstances and worries. Jakow Wajsman helped his mother in the ironmonger's at the Square. Majer Siwek ran their [his family's?] sheet-metal workshop. Similar circumstances were the lot of the majority of the *Ha'Chalutz* members. These people could not devote more than a few weekly hours to the organisation - let alone consider travelling away for training and waiting indefinitely for the longed-for certificate. As a result, the members' dependency on the organisation weakened, their enthusiasm petered out and each began to see to his own needs.

Summertime smiled on us - the workday ended while it was still light. In our evening walks, we would go up to the Four Walls (an old ruin by the wayside). Legends circulated that demons inhabited it and that one needed to be extremely cautious of them. Their ploy was to ask passers-by for fire, and woe to him who gave them what they requested. Further down the road stood a tree which, from the *shtetl*, could be seen on the horizon and which the residents called "*Dus Bayml*" [The Tree (affectionate)]. Sometimes, we left the road for the narrow paths in the fields of grain, disappearing amongst the tall stalks. Then, we expressed our yearning with song - *Sham Bimkom Arazim*¹⁵, *Hachniseni Tachat Knafecha*¹⁶, *Shir Ha'Kotzrim*¹⁷ and others.

One moonlit night, we were sprawled out in the channel next to the [Tadeusz] Kościuszko monument, by the road to Jaworznik. We were 7-8 friends, who always spent time together. The town behind us was already fast asleep and we sat, weaving dreams and making plans for the future.

¹⁴ [TN: "*The Young Guard*"; a Socialist-Zionist, secular Jewish youth movement founded in 1913, as a result of the merger of two groups, *Ha'Shomer* ("The Guard") a Zionist scouting group, and *Tzeirei Zion* ("The Youth of Zion") .]

¹⁵ [TN: "*There Where the Cedars Are*" (*Dort wo die Zeder*); early Zionist anthem composed by Dr Yitzchok Feld (1862-1922), which was later translated to Hebrew.]

¹⁶ [TN: "*Take Me Under Your Wing*"; poem by Chaim-Nachman Bialik.]

¹⁷ [TN: "*The Reapers' Song*"; as this song was only composed in the 1940's by Arnon Magen, we may surmise the author was referring to "*Shirat Ha'Katzir*" (*The Harvest Song*), which was written in 1920 by Yitzchak Katznelson.]

On the one hand, we were filled with pride that we had been fortunate enough to live in such an interesting era, unlike the many generations before us. On the other hand, we felt powerless when faced with the great many difficulties which we needed to overcome in order to achieve our goal.

We found out that, from time to time, examinations of candidates for *Aliyah* were held. We belonged to the town of Będzin. The examiner was a representative of the Land of Israel Bureau in Warsaw - his decision determined the outcome. Only a few applicants from our town signed up. Srul-Szyja Borsztajn accompanied us, as representative of the Zionist Organisation in Żarki. Upon his return, he told the Chairman of the Zionist Organisation in Żarki that the representative from Warsaw had been favourably impressed by the candidates from our town, despite the fact that many applicants from other localities had been rejected by him that same day.

As the High Holidays approached, “the fish in the water trembled¹⁸” - and the Jews [began] to tremble even earlier. The Day of Judgement passed and *Simchas Torah*¹⁹ came. A chill penetrated their bones - even though the cold had not yet arrived. They did not wish to remind themselves of the overcast days, the long, dark nights and the muddied roads that awaited them immediately following the Holidays, but instead chose to wilfully forget them - turning their eyes to the cup, rejoicing and merrymaking all day long. On the *Shemini Atzeres* holiday, a whole group of us were walking down ul. Częstochowska when, from the house of Chaim’l Szaje’s²⁰ (Lajtenberg), the voices of Jews surged forth, members of the *Chevre Kadisha*, who were drinking heavily. On the spot, we decided that we, too, would continue celebrating into the night - meaning the night of *Simchas Torah*²¹. Lajtenberg’s son, Nojeh, suggested we hold our celebration at his house, while his father was attending the *Hakufes*²² at their *shtiebel*. We also saw to an artistic section, in which Jakow-Lajzer Alterwajn and the writer of these lines participated. Pinchas Rytterband went with another fellow to Wolf Stoczyk to order a barrel of beer. The latter promised to send a barrel of *good* beer over - truly like wine! Shortly afterwards, they rolled the barrel of beer over to us. Jakow Wajsman took it upon himself to tend to the dispensing of the beer, from the barrel, into the glasses that were extended to him. He sat down in a chair in a corner and the huge, round barrel was set next to him. He was very pleased with his task as, now and then, he would sample glass after glass - until he was forced to relinquish his post and pass his responsibilities on to another. The same fate befell Jakow-Lajzer Alterwajn. We came back home after the party at a late hour, without any appetite for the holiday meal - and our families thought this strange.

The following morning, while I was still in bed, Alterwajn knocked on my window and woke me to go to the Study-hall for the holiday prayer service. His facial expression was sad and sombre - I could not work out why. When we arrived, from my [other] friends, I learned of the sequence of events following the previous evening’s celebration, Alterwajn had not been capable to make his way back home, because he had been too drunk. They had laid him on a bench. His father Henech z”l was extremely concerned that he had not returned home and went out to look for him. Once in the

¹⁸ [TN: Old Yiddish saying: “When the month of Elul arrives, even the fish in the water tremble” – in fear of the impending Day of Judgement.]

¹⁹ [TN: In the Land of Israel, *Simchas Torah* - a festivity celebrating the completion of the yearly reading of the Pentateuch in the course of the weekly Torah Reading – is celebrated on the *Shemini Atzeres* (Eighth [day] of Assembly) holiday – the day following the festival of *Sukkos*. In the Diaspora, however, where according to rabbinical law each holiday must be observed twice due to potential inaccuracies in the Hebrew calendar, the first day after *Sukkos* is referred to as “*Shemini Atzeres*,” while the second *Shemini Atzeres* holiday is called “*Simchas Torah*,” making them two separate days.]

²⁰ [TN: According to the Żarki official records, this is Jochim son of Szaja Lajtenberg and Rywka née Fajerczyk. Jochim (Chaim) Lajtenberg was married to Rywka Borensztajn.]

²¹ [TN: Becoming inebriated in the afternoon would have jeopardised their participation in the evening prayer service opening the *Simchas Torah* holiday, as one who is drunk is forbidden from praying. Furthermore, they were expected to partake in the holiday night meal at home with their parents.]

²² [TN: Explained above on p.54.]

street, he became aware of the facts. When he heard in what situation his son was, he returned home without him.

After the Holidays

The days passed by very monotonously. At the recommendation of Jakow-Icchok Rozyner, who lived in Częstochowa, the actor [Jechiel] Lewensztajn, who had completed a drama course in Moscow, came to us, every once in a while with a troupe, and they performed at the fire-fighter's hall. At the initiative of the Zionists, it was decided to establish an amateur troupe under his management and directorship. Among the participants was Jakow-Lajzer Alterwajn, who played the role of Chatze in the play "*Der Dorfs-jung*²³" with great success. For a while, the performances and [even] the rehearsals themselves dispelled the boredom of the *shtetl*'s youth.

I shall conclude this article with a few lines in memory of Awreme'le Fajner²⁴ z''l.

Fortune did not smile on him although he did, occasionally, have brilliant days when, on Saturday afternoons at the Zionists' hall, he would speak, with the members sitting, transfixed, on the benches, listening to his every word. At those times, his whole being soared into different worlds. He gleaned all his knowledge only by reading books. He was versed in the history of different peoples. I recall his detailed lecture on the history of the Poles. When, in the middle of a lecture, he wished to convince the audience, he would raise his shoulders and then drop them. Just as much as fortune smiled on him on Saturdays and holidays, it turned its back on him in everyday life. More than once, he bemoaned to me the fact that many parents could not afford to raise their sons to become anything but cobblers or street urchins. He was among the former. Although, as an honest and talented young man, he did succeed in life to some extent, he was not able to settle down - viz. to get married and live a normal life. His life was a double one, without any harmony between the spiritual [i.e. intellectual] and the material. His profession was not to his liking and this took its toll on him. What he encountered in his daily life was not to his taste and, in the spiritual arena, he was not given a footing beyond a certain point. He hovered between these two worlds and could not find his place. I remember a few radiant periods during which he was wooing girls whom he fancied, but reality always let him down. At a later stage, he was seeing a young lady whom everyone thought would become his future spouse (this was in 1924/25). But in this case, too, he was to be disappointed and, as a result, he left the town to try his luck in the big wide world. He journeyed to Paris in the hope that he would be able to make it there. He spent some six months in Paris and he saw a reality which differed to the one he had envisaged. His father Mane'le z''l had meanwhile fallen ill and, missing him, he wrote to him requesting that he return - so that he should see him while he was still alive. Awreme'le did not think on it much, as he was very sentimental - he packed his things and returned.

He did not return to his despised occupation of old. For several weeks, he went about unemployed and that is the situation in which I found him, when I came to the *shtetl* on a visit - he was depressed and full of bitterness for cruelty of life.

There was one more bitter pill which he was forced to swallow. In an act of desperation, he wed the daughter of Jankel *Melamed*, who was living in Kraków. The marriage was an unsuccessful one. When I visited him in Będzin, he was more depressed than ever. It was then that he poured his heart out to me.

²³ [TN: "*The Village Youth*," by Leon Kobrin – also known under the title "*Yankel Boyle*"; originally a story, later adapted to theatre.]

²⁴ [TN: *The author's cousin, a son of Mane'le Fajner and Cyrla née Erenfryd. The author was a son of Wigdor Fajner and Rywka née Alterwajn.*]

When the Germans entered Będzin, his back luck continued to pursue him. His wife having died, he lived alone in the flat. The Germans confiscated it and put his furniture out in the courtyard. He did not wait for the Germans to send him to the furnaces of annihilation, but anticipated [them] by dying, amongst his belongings in the corner of the yard, on "*Alten Mark*"²⁵ S\street, house №4.

May his memory be forever blessed in the hearts of all the Żarki *landsleit*.

Jakow Fajner
Ra'anana

²⁵ [TN: *Old Market (Stary Rynek).*]